

*1. How does the US administration see the political crisis in Bucharest?*

The situation in Romania does have the attention of a lot of people now elsewhere in Europe and in the United States. The Constitutional Court gave its advice, but what's done is done. We are watching developments over the next few weeks closely because this does seem to be an important moment for Romania and its future.

*2. In one of your statements on March 21<sup>st</sup>, quoted by Rompres news agency, you said that "The United States are worried that Romania could make steps back" in the fight against corruption, the reform in justice and the rule of law. Which is the USA position regarding the latest evolutions on the political scene in Bucharest?*

I think what I said – it was in a speech at the Romanian-American Chamber of Commerce on March 28 – was that as a friend of Romania, we remain ready to help you continue to strengthen your democratic institutions. It's been a long road; Romania has made a lot of progress. But I also said that the recent political turmoil here has raised questions. That includes for investors and business people, but not only them. What I have said many times is that it is vital for Romania to continue making progress on reforming its justice system and especially in fighting corruption. Remaining credible on the issue of corruption is key to many things, including Romania's ability to bring prosperity to its people, and to keep democracy intact.

*3. Could this political crisis affect the "strategic partnership" between USA and Romania?*

I know there is a lot of speculation about that right now, and most of it seems to me to be out of place. Just in the last few days, there have been a lot of inaccurate media reports here.

I was pleased to see that, on the anniversary of NATO on April 4, that President Basescu, Prime Minister Tariceanu and the leadership of the Social Democratic Party all reaffirmed their commitment to the Euro-Atlantic relationship and Romania's role as a particularly active and committed NATO member. The basics in our partnership are not about personalities, and should not be about personalities. So we expect to see a lot of

continuity in Romania's policies. That is what Romania's leaders are telling us.

Our view is that we have a really close strategic partnership, and we look at it in the long-term. Our hope is that the true pillars of the U.S.-Romanian relationship, like our work together in NATO, like our cooperation in fighting terrorism, like our efforts to grow our economic and commercial relationship, can be kept out of the political fray here in Bucharest. We genuinely believe in the U.S.-Romanian relationship, it's something we value highly, it is something we will continue to pursue in the months and years ahead.

Let me add, however, that being a member of NATO, and of the EU for that matter, means a lot of other things, including a commitment to meeting high standards of democratic governance. Not just in theory, but also in practice. I am worried about some of the things I have been hearing in the last few weeks about political games and tactics that don't sound to me like fair play. In any fair electoral contest, there has to be a level playing field; cards cannot be stacked against one or another candidate. I always hear a lot from politicians about this "scenario" or that "scenario." I think that there should only be room now for one scenario: namely, a level playing field, and a contest in which the rules of the game don't change from one day to the next.

*4. Is it possible for the political crisis in Bucharest to create a hostile environment for the American investors?*

I spend a lot of my time trying to convince American investors to come to Romania and contribute to its growth and prosperity. I'm really optimistic about Romania; there are lots of positive signs including strong economic growth in recent years. Lots of American companies are interested, for sure.

But only Romania can create a positive investment climate. And that is not just about Americans, I hear the same concerns from plenty of others. What's a good investment climate for Americans is pretty much the same thing as it is for your European partners. There needs to be rule of law, predictability, stability. More needs to be done to fight corruption. And the longer the political turmoil goes on, the more questions investors will have.

*5. On the occasion of the meeting in Moscow with the US Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, president Vladimir Putin expressed, once again, his concern regarding the settlement of the American military basis in Romania. Which are the reasons given by Russia in the discussions with the United States? Why does Russia fear that much?*

Secretary Gates felt he had very good consultations in Moscow, whatever you might have read in the papers. Secretary Rice is going to go to Moscow herself in a couple of weeks and is going to discuss a wide range of issues, including the CFE treaty and our missile defense initiative. As Secretary Rice said in Oslo, we are not adversaries of Russia, in fact we face common threats.

I think there is some misunderstanding in Moscow about the joint U.S.-Romanian military facilities. The main purpose of the facilities is to allow U.S. and Romanian forces to train together and increase their ability to operate together. They will support rotating units that deploy temporarily as part of the Joint Task Force-East. It is about better partnerships, more training and preparation. This type of effort helps everybody, including our Russian friends, face the new threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, like terrorism.

*7. Could the retreat of the Romanian military troops in Iraq affect Washington's faith in Romania's being able to accomplish its own commitments?*

We really value the Romanian deployment in Iraq. Your soldiers are doing a great job. Their contribution is real, not just symbolic.

I also think both our countries gain from having Romanian forces working side-by-side with Americans in Iraq, in Afghanistan and in the Balkans. Our forces get used to working together. They get a wealth of experience which they can draw upon for the future. And it's defense transformation and modernization in practice, not just on some piece of paper back here in Bucharest. In short, it's good for you, for us, and for Romania's credibility at NATO and in the region.

So the decision about Romania's commitment in Iraq is Romania's to make. We know the situation in Iraq is a challenge, but it's one that Romanian troops have faced squarely. Whatever decisions are ultimately taken by your Romanian government, we look forward to a genuine consultation process.

*8. Have you talked to the Prime-minister Calin Popescu Tariceanu, the Minister of Defense, Teodor Melescanu and the Foreign Minister, Adrian Cioroianu on this matter?*

I'm happy to say that I meet with the Prime Minister regularly, and we do talk about Iraq along with many other subjects. Likewise, the Foreign Minister and the Defense Minister, with whom I hope to meet with very regularly too.

*9. Will the retreat of the Romanian military troops in Iraq determine any changes in the Bush administration's politics towards Iraq?*

Like I said, we really value Romania's contributions in Iraq and we hope that Romanian troops will continue to contribute to the Coalition mission there for as long as possible.